

HOW THE GODS WERE MADE

(A Study in Historical Materialism)

BY

JOHN KERACHER

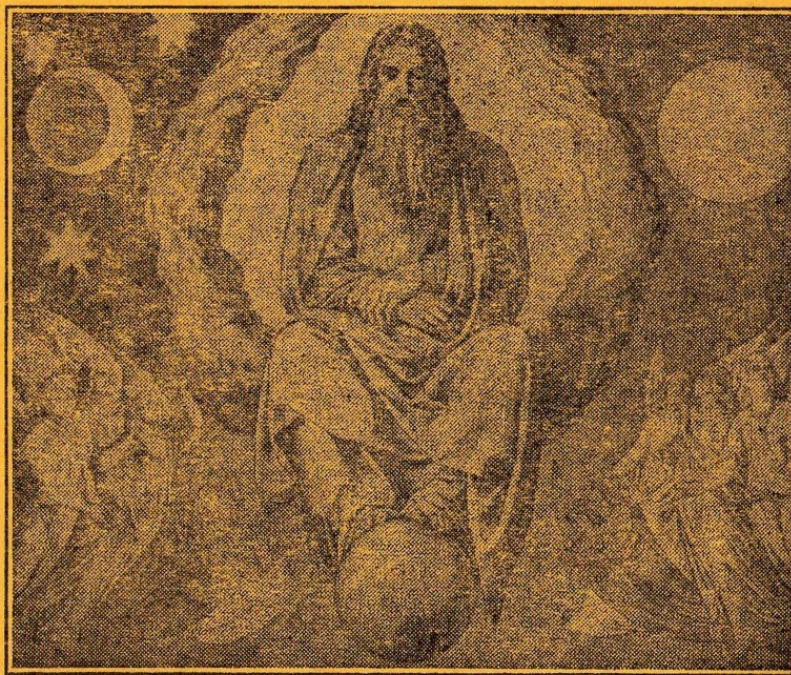


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John Keracher

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INTRODUCTION

When I came into contact with the Socialist Party of America., in the spring of 1910, I heard some of its members speaking about the Materialist Conception of History. I had never heard the term before and was curious to know just what it meant.

Approaching those members, I asked for an explanation. Soon, I discovered,

as it seemed to me then, that there was something mysterious about it. They told me that they believed in it and were sure that it was quite scientific, but that it was not easy to explain as it was very “deep.” They said that I would have to read a good deal in order to grasp it. Later, I had an opportunity to ask some of the prominent members of that party to explain the Materialist Conception of History, but I met with no more success. I came to the conclusion that I was too green to grasp the matter and for the time being passed it up.

Meanwhile, I had subscribed to a number of socialist

papers and started to read socialist books and pamphlets. Soon I noticed that there was much contradiction existing on socialist theory. The authors and editors held different views, often quite opposite, on important questions of principle. This was explained to me as a “permissible difference of opinion on the part of the writers.” I was assured that everything was all right, that “in a democratic movement, such as ours, much allowance must be made for individual opinion.”

I was not satisfied with this answer. Something must be wrong, I felt, with a movement which permitted such a wide range of opinion on the principles of socialism. Directly opposite views could not both be correct. I was still religious, although a skeptic, and naturally asked the question: “Where does socialism stand on religion?”

To this question I received three different answers. Some told me that socialism and religion were in harmony, that “Socialism is practical Christianity.” Others said, “Socialism is a materialist philosophy and, therefore, leaves no room for belief in the supernatural.” There were still others, who said, “We take no stand whatever on religion. It is a private matter.” These conflicting opinions puzzled me.

Among the books which I had bought were some by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. I had previously read some pamphlets which mentioned them and had seen many quotations from their works in the socialists periodicals. I turned my attention to their writings and after a time began to grasp what was

meant by the Materialist Conception of History. The more I read of their writings

the clearer it became to me. I began to overcome my former indefinite position on the question of religion, and upon other questions, such as social reforms, the function of industrial organizations (i. e. the unions), the State, and other institutions. I came to the conclusion that if Marx and Engels were correct, a great many others calling themselves socialists, must be wrong.

By this time I was quite enthusiastic about the illuminating effect of the Materialist Conception of History. It threw an entirely new light upon what little historic knowledge I had previously acquired. I was just learning to lecture. I had delivered a few talks on elementary economics and industrial history. It occurred to me that if I could explain to the workers what was meant by the Materialist Conception of History, I would be using my time to the best advantage. I tried the experiment with the material at my disposal and at the outset I met with a question which almost upset me. The question was put somewhat like this: "It is all very well to use the Materialist Conception of History to explain material things and their relations, but how are you going to account for the SPIRITUAL things; can the Materialist Conception of History do that?"

It was this challenge which forced me to conclude that if the SPIRITUAL things could not be explained from the materialist standpoint, then there must be something wrong with the Materialist Conception of History. I felt that this could be done and set to work. The following data were gathered from many sources. I claim no original

ideas. I have simply put together the ideas of others for the purpose of showing where the so-called spiritual things come from, and also for the purpose of making comparison with other explanations of history, to prove the soundness of the Marxian method.

John Keracher.

Chicago, Ill., 1929.

HOW THE GODS WERE MADE

As soon as man became conscious of his existence, as soon as he was able to reason, he was bound to ask himself the questions: "From whence did I come?" and "Whither do I go?" It was very natural that he should wonder how he came to be here on earth and what would become of him after death. He saw his fellow men fall asleep, never to awaken. He saw others killed, life extinguished. It was his efforts to solve these problems that caused primitive man to create beliefs in life after death and in the power of super-human beings.

When we look back over the experiences of the race, the history of mankind, we find that man has formed three different ways of explaining his activities. In other words, there have been but three conceptions of history, three basic "explanations by man of his doings on this planet. It is true that more than three names have been given to these conceptions of history, but they will all fall within the following: First, in order of time, is the Theological Conception of History; second, is the Idealist Conception of History, and, third, is the Materialist Conception of History.

The Theological Conception

The Theological Conception of History is founded upon the belief that back of the universe there is some supreme being or beings, either good or bad, and that all the doings of mankind are but the working out of the will of these supernatural beings. History, therefore, is but a record of the unfolding divine scheme of things.

This conception of history held the field for many ages. Today it is almost abandoned. The theologians themselves will no longer defend it, as it puts them in an absurd position. If it is true that man is simply carrying out the divine will; that his actions are part of a divine plan; if he is preordained to do certain things and cannot do otherwise, then he is not directly responsible for his actions. Murder, rape, theft and other crimes are not his work. He is but the humble agent carrying out the divine will. Benjamin Franklin in his autobiography expresses this concept as follows: "And now I speak of

thanking God, I desire with all humility to acknowledge that I attribute the mentioned happiness of my past life to his divine providence, which led me to the means I used and gave the success. My belief of this induces me to hope , though I must not presume , that the same goodness will still be exercised toward me in continuing that happiness or enabling me to bear a fatal reverse, which I may experience as others have done; the complexion of my future fortune being known to him only in whose power it is to bless, even in our afflictions.”

Robert Burns expresses the same belief in prayer:

Oh, Thou Great Being! what thou art surpasses me to know,

Yet sure I am, that known to Thee are all Thy works below,

But if I must afflicted be to suit some wise design,

Then man my soul with firm resolves to bear and not repine!

Burns and Franklin lived during the same period, the period of bourgeois revolutions. For those times, they were advanced thinkers, yet unable to break away from the theological conceptions of the universe and its divine ruler- ship.

According to the Theological Conception of History, it would logically follow that if I were to kill someone I would not be to blame. I could not help doing it since a greater power than I had decreed that I must. On the other hand, if I were to save the life of another, at the risk of my own, I would be unworthy of any praise, since I could not avoid doing it. How often do we hear people say in such cases, “It was God’s will.” If this conception of history is defended, then it means that man is not directly responsible for his actions. The “good” or “evil” which he does are not his own doings. He is but an humble instrument carrying out the will of superior powers. To punish him here, or in “the hereafter,” for what he could not avoid doing, is an indefensible position.

I

The Idealist Conception of History

This conception of history, which is advanced today by official society, is based upon the theory of a free-will.

According to this conception, man is a free agent. He has the power to make a choice in relation to his actions, the power to choose between “good and evil.” God may help him, or the devil may tempt him, but he alone must make the final choice. This free-will, this power to choose between “good and evil,” is necessary to the making of a “sinner.” If man has no power to choose he cannot be a “sinner.” The saving of souls would come to an end. Today the church defends the free-will theory. But what is the will? It is the mind in which ideas are formulated. The Idealist Conception of History is based upon the human idea.

From the standpoint of the defenders of this conception, the idea is all-important. Good people are those with good ideas, good thoughts. Bad people are the result of bad thoughts, “wicked” ideas. The ideas, good or bad, come first and the actions follow therefrom. Clever people are the outcome of clever ideas. Stupid people are the result of their own stupid ideas. Advanced nations are based upon advanced ideas, and backward nations upon backward ideas. People who are up-to-date are so because of their progressive ideas and out-of-date people are the result of old-fashioned ideas. This is the essence of the Idealist Conception of History.

If we follow up this conception of history and apply it to society in general we find that great nations are the result of certain nations having great men, who in turn are the result of their great ideas. History, viewed from this standpoint, simply means that great men have been the makers of history. This is sometimes called “The Great Man

Theory of History.” Of course it falls within the idealist conception. The whole conception rests upon the notion that the idea comes first and that action follows the idea.

To a certain extent this conception is correct. It cannot be denied that ideas precede action. For instance, we cannot have a house until we have the idea

of one. We can speculate upon how a house will look before it is started. An architect can draw a plan, he can picture a house in advance. He can show you what it will look like after it is built. Before we can have a table someone must first think of one. Not only the first table which was made but also every individual table that is produced. The idea of a table may have originally arisen from food being placed on a flat stone while eating.

Applying this conception to all things, we are bound to admit that the idea comes before the produced object. If we view history from this standpoint we are forced to conclude that its unfolding is the unfolding of human ideas. There is nothing wrong with this conception as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough, for we are faced with an important question: "If all of our achievements are the result of ideas, if history is the outcome of the human idea, WHERE DOES THE IDEA ITSELF COME FROM?"

The Materialist Conception of History

The answer which we give to this question is, that ALL OF THE IDEAS OF MAN HAVE SPRUNG FROM THE MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH HE

LIVED AND MOVED. This is the substance of the Materialist Conception of History.

In a primitive society, where man is in contact with few things and uses but few tools or weapons, his ideas are primitive, and very limited. In a highly complex society, where man is in contact with countless things, a complex environment, his ideas are complex, many sided, and extensive.

Man's material surroundings determine not only the extent of his ideas but also their general character. The first law of life is "self preservation." Man must eat and protect himself from the elements. The growth of his ideas follow, in the main, the development of the means of securing a living. The first question that man asks, the one which is still the foremost question with the majority, is not in relation to how we came to be here or what will become of us when we die, but "When do we eat?" That is an eternal question. Idealists may repudiate such a "sordid view" but we can rely upon

them to be on time at the dinner table.

A few years ago a psychological experiment was tried at a great prison. It was decided to hang one of the prisoners who had been sentenced to die, in the court yard where all the prisoners could see the hanging. As the rope was placed around the neck of the condemned man and the hangman was ready to spring the trap, the hundreds of prisoners looking from their cells were silent. The psychologists were keenly observing the effects of the scene when the silence was broken by a lusty-voiced prisoner demanding to know: "When do we eat?" followed by a clamor for breakfast.

The highway over which man has traveled, down through the ages, has been an economic one. Morality, ethics, religion, politics, war, the arts, all that man has achieved, everything which he has today, rests upon an economic foundation. Just try to get away from this and see how far you can travel. When Napoleon said, "Armies travel upon their stomachs/ 5 he only told a part of the truth. Soldiers are not the only ones who have to eat. The truth is that all society travels upon its stomach. This is a very simple fact but many people lose sight of it.

The present social arrangement is quite complex, the social superstructure almost hides the economic foundation upon which it rests. Many people are so secure that they quite overlook the fact that they eat and wear clothes, and that these things have to be produced by labor. But there are millions of others who never get a chance to forget it. The economic problem is right on their doorstep. Next to this main factor, the economic, come other material factors, such as climate, topography and other natural features of man's environment. If the community is an agricultural region, or an industrial city, it has corresponding effect upon the ideas of the populace. All of the ideas of man, religious, moral, political, etc., are but the reflex of the economic and material environment. The brain acts much like a mirror. It reflects all that shines into it from the outside. The live senses convey to the brain sense perceptions, "food for thought. 55 The brain "digests 55 these sense perceptions into

ideas. If the ideas become more or less fixed we call them opinions. The

brain cannot reflect that which is not. It can only reflect real things.

When a child is born its mind is like a clean page upon which nothing yet is written. I do not contend that its mind is blanks but that it is incapable of thinking . At this stage it is governed by instinct alone. It responds to hunger or pain. The awakening of its mind follows the awakening of the senses. The five senses, seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and touching, must first function before there can be anything resembling thought in the mind of a child.

All the lies and humbug, all the superstition and fear, that a child may acquire as it grows up, are the result of its environment. They are the “gifts,” very often, of fond but foolish parents. An average child, one that is not subnormal, will become really intelligent if it is brought into contact with intelligent people. But the same child, in contact with stupid people, may grow up with its mind full of nonsense, in fear and trembling of imaginary beings. Many years of a child’s life may be spent in terror of the invisible things which it is taught to believe exist around it. This is nearly always the case when the child is unfortunate enough to have stupid parents, or is born and raised in a backward neighborhood, where other children and adults are superstitious.

The five senses are like little railroads that carry sense perceptions to the brain. Many people have strange notions about the functioning of the brain. They surround the mind with much mystery, yet the brain is just a natural organ of the body like any other part. The function of the

hand, for instance, is grasping, writing, and so forth. The function of the legs is walking, running, jumping, and so forth. The function of the stomach is the digesting of food. The function of the brain is thinking. But there can be no thought without sense perceptions.

If no food is conveyed to the stomach there can be no digestion. If no sense perceptions are conveyed to your brain there will be no thinking. The five senses convey the “food for thought.” The mind is simply a functioning of the brain, just as digestion is a functioning of the stomach. The mind is

inseparable from the brain, just as digestion is inseparable from the stomach. That functioning of the mind which we call memory is simply a storing away of sense perceptions. Innumerable images, or thought-pictures, are stored away, as it were, to be used when needed and sometimes when they are not needed or even desired. The process might be likened to the storing away of countless words on phonograph records to be reproduced when wanted. Phonograph records are silent until connected with the machinery that reproduces the words through the speaker (the horn.) Your memory is silent until connected with the mental machinery, which you have the power to set in motion and give expression to your stored-up sense perceptions, through speech, or in writing, etc.

There is no thought-picture in the brain but what its counterpart exists somewhere without. In other words, all thoughts, no matter how complex or mysterious they seem to be, can be traced to their material sources, and they must be material in their origin. Thought cannot spring from anything but material. It cannot spring from nothing.

Even an imaginary thing, Santa Claus, for instance, has its material source in the body of a kindly looking old man with a long beard. Or as Josef Dietzgen points out in relation to the belief in angels, the thought is but the combination of the body of a young woman with the wings of a bird. Both are material, the wings and the woman.

A good story is told of one of the great medieval painters who had painted a beautiful angel on a church wall. One of the priests of the church laughed and pointed at the picture with the remark: "Who ever saw an angel with sandals on?" The artist promptly met the question with the retort: "Who ever saw an angel without?"

If you have a nightmare and you dream of pink elephants with green wings, or other such monstrosities, no matter how fantastic, you can trace all these composite thought-pictures to material sources. In fact, it is impossible to think of anything that does not have a material source. There never was thought in the mind of any man but that its origin could be traced back to nature itself. You cannot think about nothing. Just try it and see how far you

will get.

There are still some people who believe that thought is inherent, that when we are born our minds are already a storehouse of knowledge. Such a notion is sheer nonsense. The doctrine of innate ideas is now completely discredited. Ollier people, while not believing that knowledge is inherent, cudgel their brains in search of what is not there. They think that if they close themselves in a room that they can draw knowledge from the “depths of their minds,” something like drawing up water from the depths of a well.

What is not put into the mind cannot be brought out. If we wish to have knowledge on a certain subject we must go to the material sources and observe through our senses, or we must go to books or other mediums to acquire knowledge that others have gathered through the use of their senses.

It should be quite clear to anyone who is not stupid or prejudiced, that the material environment is the source of all ideas. The following data on some of the main religions of the world are for the purpose of proving the soundness of this fact.

Religions, the Shadows of Real Substances

The various religions which man has developed furnish excellent proof of the soundness of the Materialist Conception of History. “But,” someone will say, “what do you mean by religion?” To take care of this question I will define religion as: “A system of worship or observance that is based upon the belief in the existence of a supernatural power, a supreme being or beings, and in life after death.” Of course I am aware of the fact that the term religion is given a very wide range today. But, since I have defined the term, the reader will know what I have in mind.

Where do such ideas come from? Are they inherent in the brain of the child at birth? No, religious ideas are acquired. They are the result of our training. If we were born into a savage tribe we would be trained to “taboo” certain things, lest we invoke evil spirits and bring harm upon ourselves, or upon the tribe. Such an environment cannot produce any other belief. Christian Science, on the

other hand, requires a highly complex business environment. Considerable amounts of money must be changing hands all the time. It must be a society in which some people are “failures” and others are “successes.”

Religion is a natural development. This is very clearly the case in its more primitive forms. It is in harmony with natural human impulses. That “first law of nature,” self preservation, is very powerful. No normal person wants to die. Everyone wants to live. Even the religious people, who sing of the glories of heaven and tell of its wonders and joys, are not in a hurry to go there. When they are sick they may say a prayer but they also call in a doctor. They don’t want to die. They want to stay in this “miserable, sinful world” just as long as possible. And there is a very good reason. It is the only world they are sure about.

Self preservation asserts itself over every obstacle. The rich man will part with his last dollar before he will part with life. The beggar, with outstretched palm, sick and diseased, eating the bitter bread of charity, hangs on as long as possible. Even to him “life is sweet.”

Life After Death—The Soul

It is out of this keen desire to live that man creates the belief in life after death. Dreams also contribute much toward this belief. We will consider the simple savage of the forest. In contact with nature he is faced with ques-

tions that he must try to answer. His shadow, or his reflection in the pool when he stoops to drink, echoes, dreams, all demand an explanation. He finds the answer as a child would. These things are part of him, yet not of him.

Modern man can account for his shadow or his reflection in a pool but the savage could not. These things were a mystery to him. His shadow followed him around or sometimes ran alongside or ahead of him. He reasoned that it was part of himself. Travelers tell of the natives of certain parts of the world who still hold to such beliefs. They tell us that when these natives are walking near a river that they are careful to keep their shadows from falling across the water, lest the crocodiles grab them by the shadow and pull them

into the river.

Savages sometimes believe that their name is part of themselves. They are careful to conceal it from strangers or enemies who might use the name to injure its owner. They believe that their echo is a real voice. It is their other-self talking. The repetition of the very sounds they have made tends to substantiate such a belief. They know nothing of the reflection of sound waves. The echo, which they hear only occasionally, they regard as a warning from their other-self. Dreams, to them, are not a fantastic product of the mind. They are real experiences.

Let us take, for example, the American Indian. When he lies down to sleep at night he may dream of going on a long journey. It is a hunting trip which takes many days. He is along with another and they kill many animals. But when he awakens and looks around he sees no dead animals near him. His bow and arrows, tomahawk and hunting

knife, lie beside him. They are as clean as they were when he lay down. He is not tired and travel-stained, but refreshed from his sleep. He concludes that it was not himself that traveled many days' journey. That must have been his other-self, his spirit, which left his body in the night. And who was with him? It was Chief Eagle Wing, who had been dead for many moons. But that could not be Eagle Wing in the flesh. It must be his other-self, back from another world. And the hunting ground, not the bleak, wind-swept prairie they had been traveling over for the past few days, but a beautiful place, well stocked with game. That was a spirit hunting ground. And if Eagle Wing had gone there to live, he would reason, it is just the sort of place to go after death and be happy in the great hunting ground of the spirits.

Here is the natural basis for the savage belief in duality, the soul, and in life after death with a "heaven" in which to live, through all eternity. And where did this heaven come from? Is it not plain that he has created it out of the material environment in which he lives and moves? Where else could it come from? The Indian is just like all other peoples. He makes his own heaven and he desires to continue his earthly ideals after death. He wants to hunt and fish amid beautiful valleys, with rushing waters and rugged mountains, or on

plains teeming with buffalo, deer and other wild animals. His “Happy Hunting Ground” is simply his earthly surroundings cast upward, as it were, in his

mind’s eye. He believes in another self that can leave the body, a soul, which cannot die when he dies. It is not a sort of abstract soul or disembodied spirit, such as modern Christians believe in. The Indian’s soul has bodily form. It has teeth and toenails, feathers in its hair and a tomahawk in its hand.

When the European invaders tried to get the Indians to accept Christianity they met with little response. The promise of eternal happiness was all right. The Indian believed in that. But where was he to spend eternity. That was the question. The Christians told him he would have to go up a golden stairway and through a pearly gate and into a city of purest gold. They told him that diamonds and rubies and other Christian treasures were awaiting him, and a golden harp upon which to play for ever and ever. “No like that kind of heaven,” the Indian would reply. And why not? He could not visualize such a place. The thought of spending eternity in that way disgusted him. To go up a golden stair and through a pearly gate held no attraction for him. He had, perhaps, never seen a stairway or a gate. There were none on the prairies nor in the forest. Pearls, rubies and other precious stones did not appeal to him. He had little love for such junk. And through all eternity to flap his angel wings and play upon a golden harp. Such an eternity for a hunter and warrior! The Indian scornfully rejected the Christian heaven. He had his own beautiful heaven and he intended to spend eternity hunting bears, buffalo and other animals, on the plains of the “Happy Hunting Ground.”

HOW THE GODS WERE MADE

The Vikings

At the time America was discovered the Indians west of the Missouri River were in the upper stage of savagery, and east of the Missouri they were in the lower stage of barbarism. But let us look at a higher people. Let us consider the mythology of the Scandinavians of the Viking age. The Vikings lived around the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries. They were much closer to civilization. They were in the upper stage of barbarism.

What is true of the Indians is true of the Vikings, and all other peoples, for that matter. Their ideas are molded by the material surroundings, and the mode of acquiring a living is the strongest influence on their minds. The Vikings were not hunters, at least that was not their chief mode of getting a living. They were sea-faring people, great fighters, warriors of the sea. They traveled much. They sailed their ships down the coast of Europe, around the British Isles and into the Mediterranean. It is more than likely that they reached the shores of America. If it was not Leif Eric-son that crossed the Atlantic, it was one of his kind. The Vikings lived by plunder. When they landed anywhere they carried off all that was worth taking. Much of their time was spent on the ocean, little time upon the land. From this mode of life, with such material surroundings, what sort of beliefs could they hold, what were their spiritual concepts?

The Norse Gods

The Vikings did not believe in one, but in many gods and goddesses. Their chief god was Odin (among the Anglo-Saxons, Woden, and Wodan or Wuotan among the

Germans). He had one eye, located in the middle of his forehead. His wife was Frigg (Friia among the Germans).

Odin was powerful and wise. They thought much of him, but their favorite was his son Thor, the thunder god, who was represented as a mighty warrior of middle-age. He was muscular and carried in his hand a great hammer. The Vikings had created him in their own image. He was a heavenly Viking.

Like all sea-going people, that which they dreaded the most was the storm. They did not have the knowledge of the natural forces that we have today. To them the rolling of the sea and the lashing of the great waves over their decks, the wrecking of their ships and the drowning of their fellows, was the work of evil spirits, demons, a great many of which inhabited the deep. A great storm meant that the demons were very angry with the Vikings. But, Thor was their friend and he battled for them. He was the thunder god and consequently when they heard a peal of thunder they believed that Thor was busy with his great hammer, clouting his enemies, the ship-wrecking demons. After the thundering, the weather would clear, which was proof that Thor's hammering was effective.

They had other gods, such as Balder, the brother of Thor, Loki, a sort of malevolent spirit, a fire god, and many more lesser spirits. These gods dwelt in Valhalla, the heaven to which the Vikings were to go after death, especially those who fell in battle. Nobody but a brave and wise warrior could go there. Cowards and fools could not enter Valhalla. And what was this heaven like? Was it a Golden City, or

a Happy Hunting Ground? We find that it was a great feast hall at the entrance of which awaited Odin to welcome the worthy Vikings to the

celestial feast.

And how was the Viking going to reach Valhalla, was he to climb a golden stair and enter through a pearly gate? No; he must sail to Valhalla. He must go there on a ship or boat. When the old Viking died his body was placed on a boat. It was covered with twigs and other inflammable material and then set on fire. Usually it was dark when the pyre was kindled and the dead Viking sailed away on the night tide. He had gone to Valhalla, where he would enjoy himself feasting, dancing and fighting, as he had done upon earth.

And where did this conception of life after death come from? It was the reflection in the Vikings' minds of their material environment and mode of life. They were worshippers, partly of nature and partly of personal gods and goddesses, created by themselves in their own image. That which they considered best, the most worth while things of life, they desired to continue in the life beyond. From the Scandinavian mythology, which was more or less general throughout western Europe, we see a survival in the names of the days of our week. Sunday is named after the sun god, Monday, or Moonday, after the moon. Woden's day is our Wednesday. Thor's day is our Thursday and Frigg's Day is Friday. Saturday is simply Saturn's day. Of course our language today is full of survivals from savage and barbarian beliefs, and indeed we have plenty of savage and barbarian beliefs and practices still with us.

The Greek Gods

We have seen how the North American savages created a heaven out of the material at hand, and how the Vikings of Scandinavia, a much higher people, did likewise in a different environment. We shall now consider the religious beliefs of an early civilization. The Greeks in the period of their imperial greatness, before the ascendancy of the Roman empire, had created for themselves a great variety of gods and goddesses. They have left behind, for us to observe, beautiful statues of their gods and goddesses, created in their own image. They are athletic, graceful and cultured looking gods. They bear the unmistakable distinctions of a higher people. The Greeks of that period had simply deified themselves.

Greek society was divided into two principal classes— masters and slaves. The latter did all the heavy and burdensome work. The former were free for cultural pursuits. When we realize this fact we can see why the primitive beliefs of savages and barbarians could not exist among those advanced people. Their environment was complex and reflected itself in the minds of the Greeks as a complex religion.

The Grecian civilization brought forth artists, sculptors, architects and philosophers of a very high order. They built wonderful cities. Their architecture is still the model for fine buildings. Their social life was full of splendor. The uncouth gods which the Norsemen created could not arise from the civilized environment of the Greek cities.

But the Greeks could not, any more than could the sav-

ages or barbarians, create a heaven and gods other than that which their environment and mode of life dictated. We find that they believed in a multitude of gods, and that these supernatural beings shared among them the powers which people of a higher civilization attribute to their one god. In other words, where the idea of a single, all-powerful god prevails, he is made to do all the work which the Greeks had divided among their many gods and goddesses.

The head of the Greek pantheon was Zeus. He was the father of the whole family of gods and goddesses, as it were. He dwelt in Olympus, the heaven of the Greeks. With him were associated many others who assisted in directing the affairs of the world. There were Apollo and his twin sister Artemis, children of Zeus by Leto.

Apollo presided over many phases of human activity. He was the god of agriculture, the sender of rain and dew, the preventer of pestilence, a protector of flocks and herds. He kept the wolves away. He was also a protector of youth, and especially did he patronize athletics. He was the god of prophecy, and also a wonderful musician. He entertained the gods with music from his wonderful instrument, the lyre.

The conflict among the gods and their changing fortunes was the explanation for the earthly conflicts and changing fortunes of mankind. The victories of the Greeks over their enemies were attributed to the triumph of certain gods over others. The ascendancy of certain phases of the social life of Greece, or calamities and setbacks, were accounted for in the same way.

Artemis, the twin of Apollo, a sort of female Apollo, presided over the hunt. She is identical with Diana, the huntress of the Romans. When the Roman empire expanded and swallowed up the Greek civilization, it took over its gods and goddesses. It is true that there were changes in their names, and some variations in their attributes, but on the whole the Roman religion was patterned after the Greek. Artemis was also a goddess of agriculture, especially the harvest, of which the Greeks apportioned a share to make sacrifice to her. Trees, and vegetation in general, were under her control, as were also the wild animals of the woods.

Then there was Orpheus, a god-man who had charge of music. A god-man is one who is born of one earthly parent and one heavenly parent. Orpheus was supposed to be the son of Oeagrus, the King of Thrace, and Calliope, one of the Muses. He was supposed to have been presented with a wonderful golden lyre by Apollo. He was taught to play upon it by the Muses (goddesses of song) and he played so well that the wild beasts upon the slopes of Mount Olympus left their caves to follow the musician, and the rocks and trees left

their places to follow Orpheus, and the rivers ceased to run, being arrested in their courses by his charming music.

Ares was the god of battle (Mars among the Romans), He delighted in fighting and in slaughter, but it was his rival, Athena, who was the goddess of military strategy. Ares of course had other attributes, in fact, the gods sometimes changed their functions. At different times and in different places they were credited with different attainments.

Athena (Minerva among the Romans) was the goddess of intellect, prudence, statesmanship, generalship, etc Statesmen and generals offered sacrifices in her temple and praised her for her attainments.

Venus was the Roman goddess of love and beauty (Aphrodite among the Greeks) with powers to change the heart, believed then to be the seat of emotions. She could turn hatred into love. Aphrodite is usually accompanied by her little son, Eros, or Cupidos (Cupid).

Hebe was the goddess of womanly beauty, and youthfulness. Among the Romans she was known as Juventas. As the goddess of youth she had the power to make the old young again. In other words she could rejuvenate mankind.

Concordia was the Roman goddess of concord. She presided over the disputes among men. She was a pacifist who carried in her hand an olive branch.

Atlas was a Titan who made war upon Zeus. He was conquered and made to bear heaven on his head and hands. He was later represented as holding up the earth. Another legend has it that Zeus turned him into Mount Atlas, which was supposed to support heaven and all the stars.

Nice (Victoria among the Romans) was the goddess of victory. She is usually represented in the act of inscribing the records of conquerors upon their shields, or upon a tablet. Sometimes she is seen leading their horses in triumph. Her brother was Zelus, the god of zeal, vigor and strife.

Vulcanus, or Vulcan, was the Roman god of fire, the

furnace god. Conflagrations were due to his anger. He was appeased by sacrifices. Delicacies were cast into fires on certain occasions as offerings to Vulcanus.

Vesta was the Roman goddess of the hearth or fireside. She had a temple where burned eternal fire, and was attended by vestal virgins, pure as herself. She typifies the purifying influence of fire.

These examples of the gods and goddesses will indicate how the Greeks and Romans consigned the control of various phases of their social life to imaginary beings, created in the image of themselves and with their own attributes, their own hopes, fears and passions.

Olympus

The Greeks, like all other people, wanted to live again after death. And we shall see presently where they wanted to go and what they wanted to do. But the idea of living again after death, makes one think of the story I once heard of a dying Irishman. The priest had been called in and he found the Hibernian was making a big noise as he was making his exit from life. "Be brave, Pat, me boy," said the priest, "ye only have to die wanst." The dying Pat replied, "Faith, Father! and that's the very thing that's worrying my soul. I wud loike to live and die several toimes." Here was an instinctive expression of the desire to live. All people have had this desire and the Greeks were no exception. Of course there were some among their most advanced thinkers who had no belief in supernatural things, nor in life after death.

When the Greek died he wanted to go and dwell among the Olympic gods, and his heaven was not a city, nor a mere hunting ground, or a festal hall, but more in the nature of an athletic arena. This was a mental reflection of their material life, their earthly ideals.

There was a grove in Elis, on the northern bank of the Alpheus, where the Greeks used to carry on their great athletic contests. This was the famous Olympic games which they held every four years. The period between those gatherings, the four-year period, was called an olympiad.

The Greeks believed that while their contests were in progress, their foot-races, horse-races, chariot-races and gladiatorial sports, the Olympic gods watched down upon the games and took sides, favoring the different contestants. This was one of their great ideals. They wanted their heaven to be like that, as they loved nature and athletic exercises. In Olympus they wanted to live for ever and ever with their gods, and they believed that their favorite dogs and horses would be with them, and that chariot races and all other athletic exercises would continue in their future life. Of course some believed in a more complex existence after death, but the above was the general belief.

The Romans expanded their empire and swallowed up the Grecian empire. They took over the arts and achievements of the Greeks and much of their mythology. The Romans had developed their gods in some cases parallel with the Grecian concepts. But with the complete absorption of Grecian civilization, we find that the Roman gods and goddesses, with different names, had the same attributes as the

Greek gods, mainly because the environment was similar, and of course there was the close historical and social contact.

One thing is certain, all these theological concepts were the product of the environment and social life of the Greeks and Romans. They were the “spiritual” reflex of their material life. The basis of their ideas, like that of all other peoples sprang from their material development. It is a recognition of this that forms the content of the Materialist Conception of History.

The Mohammedans

What was true of the Greeks, Vikings, or Indians, was true of the Asiatic peoples. Where cities played such an important part in the lives of the people, and trading (buying and selling precious wares) was their chief occupation, their religious beliefs corresponded to their material mode of life and their natural material surroundings.

Let us take the case of the Mohammedans. Their heaven is a city. Their “paradise” is but a heavenly Mecca. The poor Mohammedan is told by his priests that if he is a poor man on earth he should not let that trouble him as it will all be made up to him “in the sweet by and by.” When he goes to paradise he is going to be met at the gate by the dark-eyed houri of paradise. He may have only one wife and one camel on earth but in paradise he will have thousands of wives and thousands of camels. His heaven will furnish him with all the things which he loved upon earth and he will enjoy himself in a regal manner in a heaven which contains all the splendors of the Orient.

The Christians

The background of Christianity is Judaism. It begins as the simple worship of a paternal god. Paternalistic tribes, that is, groups of people, usually of the same blood origin, who have a chief or father at their head, invariably have a paternalistic god — a heavenly father. Take the case of Abraham, the earthly father of his people, a patriarchal leader of a clan or tribe; he and his family, and those dependent upon them worshipped a heavenly Abraham, Jahweh, or Jehovah. They were shepherds, their chief care was for their flocks. And as Father Abraham was a good shepherd, so they pictured the heavenly father as a good shepherd, looking after the earthly sheep.

In those days God would walk with Abraham and talk with him about his needs and his duties. Abraham needed God in his business. What he needed most was land upon which to feed his flocks, and of course to exclude the flocks of others. Abraham, we read, ascended a mountain to talk to God. When he came down again he told his people that God had commanded him to look in every direction from the top of the mountain and that as far as he could see, all the land was to belong to him and his seed, his heirs, for ever and ever.

Abraham therefore held his land title from on high. It was the only title to land during the period of Feudalism in Europe. The “divine rights” of the king and his aristocratic followers was the only authority they had for parceling out the territories of Europe among themselves. And just as the slaves of Abraham accepted that explanation

so the superstitious serfs of the middle ages, when told the same sort of tales by the priests, would be ready to submit to God’s will and serve the feudal lord who held his land direct from God.

The peasants often threatened to rebel, and in fact did so on a number of occasions. When they complained of the tyranny of their aristocratic masters, and threatened to take up arms against them, the priests were at hand to point out that the social arrangement was according to God’s plan. God had made

the rich and the poor, the king and the aristocrats were his servants. They held their lands and their privileges direct from him. Their rights were divine rights, and to interfere with this social arrangement was to interfere with God's plans and to defy his will on earth.

The superstitious peasants would be nonplussed with such an argument. They could not be so wicked as to defy God's will. If he had made them poor, of low estate, then they would simply have to endure their sufferings and hardships. The church pointed out that their sufferings might even be sent upon them by God to test their faith, but that they should be of good cheer as this world was only a vale of tears, a pilgrimage of darkness which would lead to the bright world beyond. If they suffered much here, they would suffer less in the hereafter. Happiness would come to them in God's good time. All that was denied them on earth they would have in abundance in heaven. Their happiness was going to begin the day after their funeral.

This was the main function of the church in relation to the peasant, to hold his rebellious spirit in check with

promises of happiness after death. When this method failed, as it occasionally did, then the aristocrats, with the blessing of the church, stamped out the rebellions of the "sinful peasant" with fire and sword.

But, to return to the "children of Israel," we find that when they were no longer a race of nomadic herdsmen, or tillers of the soil, but had expanded into a numerous and powerful nation, and had conquered Jerusalem from the Jebusites their religion underwent a great change. When the conquered city became a great trading center and Palestine was controlled by the Jews, their people were divided into two general classes, rich and poor. Their religion divided into two camps. One interpreted Judaism from the standpoint of the rich and the other from the standpoint of the poor. Jerusalem, in the days of Rome, was one of the chief cities of the Empire. It had to submit to the Roman tax-collecting methods. Its population had to "render unto Caesar the things that were Caesar's." Rome exacted much from its Jewish colony, as it did from many more conquered territories.

The religious observances of the Jewish people were no longer the simple worship of a shepherd god. Their great temple and many priests gave expression to a more complex social order. Commerce and money changing, dealing in precious metals and merchandise of all kinds was the daily occupation of a considerable portion of the population. Others, again, were but “hewers of wood and drawers of water.” There was a slave class, usually made of captives taken in battle, or purchased outright, as was the case

throughout the entire empire of Rome. Jerusalem was a rich city. Its warehouses were full of fine merchandise.

The New Jerusalem

The environment of the Jewish people brought forth the idea of a life after death that would be much like their life on earth. Their heaven was to be a great city, a heavenly Jerusalem. They were to go to the pearly gates, up a golden stairway, and travel around on streets of purest gold. They were first of all to be brought before a heavenly judgment seat, just as they were in the habit of being drawn before earthly judgment seats. They could not escape their environment in forming their conceptions of heaven. They simply had to take Jerusalem for their model. God was transformed from an ancient shepherd into a learned judge, a sort of heavenly Solomon.

Christianity, as such, while it had its background in the mythology of the Jewish people, is a product of Europe. It was in the heart of the Roman empire, the city of Rome itself, that it took root. It was during the decline and fall of the Roman empire that the material conditions furnished the foundation for Christianity.

Slave labor had become so plentiful that it forced out the free Romans of the working class. Their places on the estates were taken by slaves. The poorer Romans in the big cities were without work. Even many slaves were freed because they could not be used. This mass of jobless workers were fed by the State. The new propaganda, Christianity, which told them that “the slave is as good as his master,”

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made a big appeal to the slave class and the jobless masses. This was the religion for them, one which said, “Blessed are the poor; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” It said to the starving workers, “Blessed are ye that hunger now; for ye shall be filled.” To the oppressed slave it said, “Blessed are ye that weep now for ye shall laugh.” Heaven was to be a place for the poor, not for the rich oppressors. Christianity then preached, “Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter the kingdom of heaven. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to

enter the kingdom of God.”

The slaves, freed slaves and the unemployed proletarians of the cities, responded to the propaganda of the Christian evangelists. They had no hope on earth. The proletarians of those days were not engaged in production. They were not carrying on the world’s work. Their places had been filled by slave labor. There was nothing for them in this life, as far as they could see.

The present-day proletarians, the wage-workers of the modern world, hold the future in their hands. Our class is carrying on all productive occupations. From the floor-sweeper in the modern factory, to many of the higher executives, industry is now carried on by propertyless employees, proletarians, hired “hands,” and hired “heads.” The Roman proletarians were entirely excluded from production. There was no machinery in those days, except the human machine, the slave.

Christianity was, at first, exclusively a slave and proletarian religion. However, in time it took such a hold upon

the populace that the ruling class could no longer ignore it. They had tried to stamp it out with fire and sword, but in vain. The soil was ready for it. The social conditions were calling it forth. There was no higher social system unfolding from Roman slavery, such as is unfolding today from wage-slavery. There was no hope for the workers on earth, but there was a promise of happiness beyond the grave. Roman civilization itself was dying. It went out of existence entirely. One of the emperors, Constantine, submitted to the inevitable. He became a convert to Christianity. It became a master-class religion and, in the main, has remained such ever since.

Feudalism

When the barbarous hordes swept over the Roman empire they were worshippers of tribal gods of many kinds, usually representative of their pastoral life, or of the elements of nature that their mode of life brought them into close contact with. We have already explained this mental reflex as expressed in the Teutonic and Scandinavian mythology.

When out of the free communistic tribes of Europe a new social order began to emerge, one based upon the ownership of land and the enslavement of the landless, Christianity made headway. The barbarous peoples of western and northern Europe became converts to Christianity, often forced upon them, however, at the point of the sword, by their rulers. Of course, like any other religion, it underwent changes to correspond to the changing environment.

This new social system, based upon land ownership, and sharply divided into classes, was Feudalism. In time it embraced the whole of Europe. It reduced the former free tribesmen to the position of serfs. The heads of the tribes with their immediate following became the aristocracy. At the head of each feudal state was the king. God was a heavenly king. Next to the king came the lords, who had monopolized the land and divided it among themselves into estates which they held by force. The good shepherd, the gentle Jesus, the little brother of the poor, was exalted to the position of an aristocrat. He became “Our Lord.” He was not a serf or a peasant to be looked down upon but a lord to be looked up to.

The Roman Catholic church interpreted Christianity for the whole of feudal Europe. The aristocrats could neither read nor write. There was no “learning” outside of the church. But, with the development of a new class within Feudalism—the merchants—knowledge began to make a little headway outside of the ecclesiastical circle. The Renaissance arose out of the needs of the merchant class.

The church fought hard against the advancement of knowledge. Persecutions, burnings at the stake, the inquisition, were the church’s methods of resisting

the encroachment upon their monopoly of the “truth.”

The Reformation

Protestantism was the name ultimately applied to the reformed doctrines of Christianity. The protestants were simply in protest against Rome's monopoly, and her claims

that she alone could interpret the Bible. They did not want to abolish the Catholic church, but to reform it in their interest. But the church would not be reformed, as it meant that the old ruling class, the aristocracy, and the church itself, would have to relinquish many privileges. Therefore, a new Christian church sprang up alongside of the old one.

What is the historic explanation of Protestantism? It was the natural outcome of a great new class struggle which was developing in Europe. The new class of merchants, traders, and artisans, were mostly city dwellers. Boroughs had developed, where in the early days of Feudalism there were few, if any, towns. The Burgesses had gained, after a long struggle, a measure of freedom, but they wanted more. Outside of the boroughs, in the nations at large, the kings and the aristocrats held sway. They taxed the burghers, who had developed from their serfs and peasants, and ruled over them with an iron hand. The burghers were very industrious. Wealth was increasing through their efforts and their thrift. The aristocrats were thriftless and they despised work, yet they profited most by the progress of this new class. By toll gates, taxes, and every conceivable means they collected the fruits of the burghers' industry, as they had been in the habit of doing with their own serfs and peasants.

This new class, the early capitalists, the forerunners of the present-day multi-millionaires, protested to the church. But that institution, having its economic roots in land ownership, itself the largest aristocrat, owning nearly one-

third of the entire land of Europe, sided with the kings and aristocracy against the rising capitalists. They said that the king could do no wrong, that he was part of the divine scheme of things, and that the aristocrats held their rights to rule directly from the Almighty.

That was the answer of the church. It was final. It allowed for no argument. The capitalists would simply have to endure what God had sent them through the aristocrats and the church. The social arrangement was of divine origin. Everything was just the way God intended it to be. But the burghers, having learned to read and write, began to investigate “the source of all wisdom” for themselves. They found much in the Bible, especially the Old Testament, to justify their social outlook. They began to preach against absolute monarchy, the infallibility of the king. And, that led to questioning the infallibility of the Pope. Suppression was the answer of the church, excommunication and death for those priests who broke with its decrees. Protestantism had its period of martyrdom. Then it had its period of triumph.

The Lutheran reformation in Germany was the triumph of the new class. It was the adaptation of Christianity to the economic needs of the bourgeoisie. Protestantism at first was simply a modified Catholicism. But the peasants, with different economic interests and much different environment, developed during the reformation a more extreme protestantism. They did not merely protest against the church and landlords, but they protested against the holding of any kind of property. They said it should be

held in common. Anabaptism, led by Thomas Munzer and many others in Luther’s time, was crushed by the capitalists and landlords, which classes fought the common danger which threatened to deprive them of their privileges. But social evolution goes on. Lutheranism evolved with the developing capitalist system until it expressed the social needs of full-blown capitalism.

In Britain, the reformation was a long - drawn - out struggle. Its best known phase was the English Civil War. Oliver Cromwell and his protestant brothers smashed the absolutism of King Charles I and overthrew the unyielding Catholic and Episcopalian aristocrats. The king’s head went off on the scaffold and many aristocratic ones on the field of battle. The reformation, though wearing a religious cloak, was a terrific class struggle. It was fought for material interests. Where it triumphed, capitalism got a freer hand, and the aristocrats had to take a secondary position, or be wiped out entirely as a class. Such was also their fate in the French Revolution.

Protestantism is the form that Christianity takes under capitalism. It serves to give a holy tinge to the robbery of wage slaves. Chattel slavery is vile and unchristian, serfdom likewise, but wage-slavery is all right. Protestantism, and in fact Christianity in general, fits in quite well with the present social system. It promises the worker happiness after he is dead. It helps to keep him contented with his present lot in life. The protestant faith is more flexible, less dogmatic, and more suitable as a present-day hope for the workers. Of course it has gone through a long evolu-

tion, and some of its present “democratic” aspects would have been regarded by the colonial Christians, “our pilgrim fathers,” as the work of the devil. How they would have reviled such an institution as the Salvation Army, modern evangelists of the type of Billy Sunday, Aimee Semple MacPherson, and the whole army of lesser performers.

Workers Who Are Still Religious

Some workers are still very religious. They think that the solution of world problems lies in the masses being converted to Christianity. To reproach or sneer at those workers is quite a mistake. They are not to blame for being religious. They are often quite sincere. Our attitude toward them should be one of sympathy, and efforts should be made to rescue them from their barbarous beliefs.

The best way to win workers away from superstition is to impart to them knowledge, real information. When knowledge goes into the mind, belief goes out. Science is the best antidote for superstition. Science is based upon facts, not upon faith. It is just the opposite with religion, it does not need any facts, faith alone is sufficient. A scientific person must know things. A religious person needs no knowledge whatever. Still it is wrong to launch an attack upon a worker because he is in the grip of religion.

At one time insane people were whipped. That was supposed to be effective treatment. Those who administered the treatment were very superstitious and they thought that insanity was the result of evil spirits in the body of the insane person. The whipping was administered to drive out

the devils and cure the patient. We do not treat insane people that way today. We know now that insanity is a condition of the mind and that it can be cured in many instances with proper treatment, but not by whipping.

Religion is also a condition of the mind but, except in extreme cases, it is not a diseased condition. If workers are religious it is because of their training. They simply don't know any better. What they need is real knowledge of the world in which they live.

Religious workers as a rule don't organize. They seldom become active in the labor movement. This is not because they hate their fellow-workers, but because they think that the "hereafter" is more important than the here-and-now. Those workers are taught to be thankful no matter what their material

conditions may be. In this way, religion is a great help to the exploiters of labor. That is one of the main reason why the capitalists are so liberal with their money for church work. You never hear of them giving their money for the building of labor temples. Religion, while it helps the employing class, plays havoc with the working class. That is why we seek to get it out of the mind of the worker, because it is a stumbling-block in the way of his economic emancipation.

The Godless Working Class

While the capitalist class itself cannot escape from superstition, the workers can and do. Of course, there are many capitalists who are free from superstition, but the bulk of them cannot free themselves from it because of their mode

of life. The most progressive members of that class often free themselves from ritualism and take up a “broad, tolerant” position in religious affairs, but when asked if they believe in a God they will say yes. When pressed to define their God, they will give the vaguest sort of answers. It usually simmers down to the statement that they believe that “there is something, somewhere, somehow, back of it all.” This is the last step down from the clouds of superstition. Many people can never rid themselves of this little nebulous “god.” Millions of workers have reached that stage. They can go no further, because they lack an understanding of the material origin of religion and its social evolution.

The most advanced section of the working class, those who are simply a little ahead of their fellows, have thrown off the yoke of superstition entirely. The greatest aid to this end is not merely access to scientific knowledge — the capitalists have that access also — but the mode of life led by the wage-workers. We often meet workers who are far from being well informed, yet on religion they have their minds made up that “it’s the bunk.”

When asked why they have come to unreligious conclusions, they cannot explain, but are quite certain that it is humbug. They despise those who preach and pretend to practice Christianity. They may, when hungry, accept its “charity,” but they despise the thing itself as well as the charity-mongers who snoop around and meddle with their humble affairs.

The capitalists may pray, “Give us this day our daily

bread,” but as Paul Lafargue wittily remarks, “Don’t give us work.” But the modern worker has no faith in prayers for bread. He knows that without a job

he cannot eat, that he must starve, beg, or steal. He has no strokes of good fortune. No rich relatives die and leave him economic security. If the stock market rises, it means nothing to him. He cuts no “melons.” There are no benevolent gods in his life. All of his experience teaches him that if he and his family are to eat, he must work for them and earn their daily bread through his mental and physical efforts. Then again the worker’s mode of acquiring the daily bread is different from that of the capitalist. The latter may be playing golf, or sailing the sunny seas in his steam yacht, while millions of dollars come rolling his way. (His god is good to him.) But the worker in contact with the greasy wheels of industry is in quite a different position. He has to give up many hours of his life’s energy each day in order to get the few miserable dollars necessary to sustain life for himself and his family.

The modern worker is different from the old-time land slave. The peasant or serf who worked in the fields, in contact with nature, but quite ignorant of the working of the forces of nature, was bound to be superstitious. He was illiterate. He would believe things that the modern worker would laugh at. If his horse or cow dropped dead, he would say, “It is God’s will.” He would think it was punishment for his sins. He would run for the crucifix or holy-water.

The worker in the modern factory has similar experi-

ences. His machine “goes dead.” It stops with a groan. But the worker does not attribute it to supernatural causes, he does not think that God has something to do with it. He does not run for the crucifix or the holy-water, but for the oil-can and monkey-wrench. In practice, he is a materialist. He continually thinks from cause to effect. When he enters the factory, if he still has spooks, he leaves them at the gate. If he did not act as a materialist, he would soon lose a finger or hand, or perhaps his life. He watches continually for natural causes and he reasons about them and, in fact, has no time for anything else.

When the worker steps out of the factory, he is still in a more or less mechanical environment. Electric cars and automobiles rush past him. He

may travel home on an elevated railway or in a high-speed railway train. He uses a telephone, and listens, through his radio, to voices many miles away, brought into his home through the air. By turning a dial or pressing a button, he can shut them off. Everywhere he is in touch with doings that equal or surpass many of the “miracles” of the Christian Bible. He knows what can be done and what cannot be done. He doubts or disbelieves entirely in the dead ever living again. It is not being done these days. He puts it down along with stories of fairies, goblins, Jack the Giant Killer and Santa Claus.

While the environment in which the worker lives removes his superstitions and causes him to look no longer for happiness beyond the grave, it does not entirely remove from his mind the belief that the present social order is all right. It is another experience of a material kind that

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contributes most to his social enlightenment. It is his economic experience.

The thinking worker today knows that he and his fellows are producing more wealth than any former generation of workers were capable of. The powerful mechanical monsters, which he and his fellows have fashioned, chew up raw material and turn out finished products at a terrific speed. Yet, despite the various and wonderful things he produces and their vast quantities, he often finds himself without the common necessities of life. He is periodically thrown out of employment. His periods of unemployment occur more frequently. Each time they come, they embrace a larger number of his fellow workers. He sees millions out of work for months at a time. He learns that in some countries there are millions permanently unemployed, anxious to work but unable to obtain a job. He knows that it is through no fault of those men that they and their dependents are hungry. He also observes that the capitalists, the owners of the industries, have just the opposite experience. They and their families are rolling in wealth. He sees them spending for one luxury more than his whole year's earnings amount to. From such a material environment, from such economic experiences, the workers are learning that

the present social order, as far as they are concerned, is out of gear.

Proletarian Revolutionists

When the peasant of the past was confronted with his social problems, when he felt the weight of the master's whip or the pangs of hunger, he was consoled by the

thought that his good time was ahead, that his happiness would begin the day after his funeral. But the modern worker, having no confidence about happiness beyond the grave, turns his attention to a solution of his problems here on earth. He sees around him an idle, parasitic class, sometimes the third or fourth generation of wealthy capitalist families, the members of which he knows have never participated in production of any sort. He also sees the propertyless class, his own kind, doing all the useful, productive work. He realizes, more and more, that it is the proletarians, the wage-workers, who operate the productive forces; that everywhere, from top to bottom, it is his class that is carrying on industrial production. Organization and Emancipation

A generation ago it was still possible for considerable numbers of workers to escape from the jobs and get into business for themselves. But those days are gone forever and the workers are slowly but surely awakening to this fact. Industries are so vast today that they require enormous capital at the outset. The day of the small shop, the individual business, is over. The last small business field, storekeeping, the retail trade, is rapidly being absorbed by the department store and the advancement of the chain-store system.

It is out of this material environment that the thought is being borne home to the advanced section of the working class, that there is no escape from wage-slavery for themselves or their descendants. They are beginning to realize that there is no individual solution for their problem, that

as individuals they are helpless, and that there is nothing for them but wage-slavery for life, piling up millions for a useless class, whose sole remaining social function is the collection of profits, interest and rents.

When the worker realizes that his problem cannot be solved by individual action, he turns to collective action, to organization. He sees that the wheels of social progress cannot be turned back, and that the great industries cannot be broken up into small, individually owned shops. Collective ownership of the means of production is the only solution he can find; the mills, mines and factories must be owned by the community, by society.

Collective production, the turning out of vast quantities of standardized commodities by vast armies of producers, is the material and economic foundation for Communist thought.

Collective ownership by society as a whole is the only possible way out of modern slavery. The gateway to individual escape is now closed and barred. Only by collective action on the part of the working class can the world and the fullness thereof be transferred from the hands of the parasites to those of the producers, and the poverty of the workers abolished forever.

Every intelligent worker knows that if there is poverty it does not spring from scarcity, but from the reverse, oversupply. There is nothing wrong with the productive process, it is wonderful. It is the misappropriation of the products that is wrong. Only the workers with a clear understanding of their economic and material surroundings, can solve

this age-old problem. And it is only now under social production, that the means of solving the problem are at hand. The first step is the conquest of political power and the establishment of a proletarian government. The second step is the socialization of all industry.

In the struggle for this goal many obstacles confront the working class, not the least of which is their own mental state. "The tradition of all past generations weighs like an Alp upon the brain of the living," says Marx. This is unfortunately true of the working class. The workers are still carrying many traditions. They are still carrying religious ideas that belong with the past, beliefs that arose out of economic and material conditions that have long since passed away. This is largely due of course to the master-class training they receive, their so-called education.

But the material environment and the changing economic conditions, which brought about new religious forms for former classes, will bring no religious form for the modern workers.

The promise of happiness after death as a compensation for present poverty and suffering is met by the modern proletariat, not with a new religion, but with a mighty political movement, world-wide in its scope, with an objective, not in the hereafter, but in the here-and-now.

This unreligious movement, with its economic and material foundations, and its political and economic objective, is the only hope for the world's workers. Its first commandment is, "Workers of the world, unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains, and a world to win."

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